

12316.aaa.31.

REFORMATION,

&c.

(PRICE TWO SHILLINGS)

Projector
K



REFORMATION:

OR,

A PLAN FOR ABOLISHING

CHRISTIANITY.

BrA
HUMBLY SUBMITTED TO THE

CONSIDERATION

OF THE

LEGISLATURE.

"O, reform it altogether."

HAMLET.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR T. BECKET, PALL-MALL,
BOOKSELLER TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE
OF WALES, AND TO THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES
THE PRINCES.

M D C C L X X X V I I .

E R R A T A.

*Page 38, line 10, for continues, read
continue.*

*Page 74, line 11, for Haoityulbsh dny, read
should it by any.*



es/a
A D D R E S S.

THE following pages
are thrown together
with little order or method,
and are to be considered as
the outlines only of a Plan
projected chiefly for the
good of the State. If,
admiring my patriot-spi-
rit,

rit, his Majesty's ministers should be pleased *to send for me*, (and I very humbly *insinuate* that I am to be found at my Bookseller's every day about dinner time) I shall certainly *wait on them with the greatest pleasure*. And when they have rewarded me with a "Post of Honour," i. e. *any kind of employment that will bring in about a thou-*

[vii]

thousand a year---I will lay
before them the particulars
of this my scheme; and
ever after subscribe myself

Their much obliged,

Most obedient,

And most faithful

Humble servant,

A PROJECTOR.

Lately Published,
(By the AUTHOR of this TRACT)
A NEW EDITION,
IN TWO VOLUMES, 12mo.
PRICE 5s. SEWED.

A
TRIP TO HOLLAND:
CONTAINING
SKETCHES OF CHARACTERS;
TOGETHER WITH
CURSORY OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE DUTCH.

And speedily will be published,
D I A L O G U E S.
In the manner of LUCIAN.

REFORMATION.

AS this is an age in which
our politicians are greatly
labouring to reform the state,
and as it is the prevailing opi-
nion that they will *most assuredly*
succeed in their endeavours,---I
thought I could not do a more
acceptable service to the public,
A than

than by laying down a plan for a reformation of the abuses in the church: or, in other words, for extirpating the Christian religion from his majesty's dominions.

Not doubting but that my intended project will meet with the approbation and encouragement of almost every order of men (I say almost, for excellent as it is, there will certainly be some to decry it), I shall, after

after some little preamble, proceed to shew how far it may be of advantage both to the state and to the people ; and also in what degree it may be likely to meet with censure and opposition.

It is acknowledged, I believe, by every one (the vulgar only excepted), that “ Religion is nothing but a name;”---“ A bugbear to frighten children with;”---“ A state engine fit

only to be played off upon the common people," &c. &c.; and consequently, that it is wholly unworthy the attention of every *thinking** Being in the universe.

But before I enter upon my subject at large, I shall attempt to delineate a character which is become extremely common in
the

* "L'homme seul (says a celebrated French writer) est l'animal qui pense," &c. But whether the author means to exclude women from the thinking part of the creation, I will not take upon me to determine. I rather hope he does not.

the world; and shall likewise venture to state my opinion as to the rank he may be entitled to hold in it.

The freethinker, or in other words, the truly fine gentleman,* (for thanks to our mode

A 3

of

* There is a very *witty* passage in Shakespeare, on which the learned bishop Warburton has made the following remark:—
 “ Shakespeare is but rarely guilty of such impious trash; and it is observable, that then he always puts that into the mouth of of his *fools*, which is now grown the characteristic

of education, almost every gentleman is a contemner of religion) laughs at the formalities of our liturgies, and ridicules the dogmas of our priests. At his outset, indeed, we find him somewhat timid and embarrassed in his manner. "He is afraid,"

teristic of the *fine gentleman*." This is rather ambiguously expressed, and should therefore be explained. The bishop undoubtedly means, that the fools of Shakespeare's time were fine gentlemen; and not, as some may be led to imagine, that the fine gentlemen of the present age are fools.

frâid," he will tell you, "of his
 foul." " He has been used to
 associate with fellows who go
 to church, and who say grace to
 their meat,"* &c. &c. Such,
 I say, will be his language. In
 a very little time, however, he
 assumes a totally different car-
 riage; he dismisses all his weak-
 nesses, he throws off all re-
 straint, and having made an
 open and a manly profession of

A 4 impiety,

* See the comedy of the Provoked Wife,
 by Vanbrugh.

impiety, he presently finds himself furrounded by a band of steady and powerful friends.

“ Dare nobly then!”—

Such is the advice of the poet, and who can be said to *dare* more, than he who boldly defies the Deity, and loudly censures all his laws? From so distinguished a personage, no one, I should imagine, will withhold the proper degree of praise, unless indeed it be some lean-witted

ted Christian,* whom nobody knows, and whom it is certainly our business to despise.

In every polite and well-bred company in England, a clergyman is the standing jest---the whetstone, as we may say, of humour: for, though he cannot repeat with Falstaff, perhaps, that he "is witty himself," he may very safely say with him, that

* " Sometimes I have no more wit than a Christian or an ordinary man has."

See the comedy of Twelfth Night

that he “ is the cause of wit in other men.” The very name of a parson, indeed, is sufficient to set the table in a roar. In a word, were it not for him and his profession, how insipidly would our hours pass! We should literally be devoured with *ennui*.

“ Great men may jest with *saints*: ’tis
wit in them,
But in the less, foul profanation.”

SHAKESPEARE.

It

It should by no means be forgotten, however, that there are two other species of merriment, which, when we have done with religion and its laws, may certainly be brought forward with the greatest success. These are, the *double entendre* and a *ridicule of the king*. This is very frequently done; and I must here beg leave to observe too, that they are introduced by our pleasant fellows with admirable propriety and effect, viz. the
former

former in the society of the women, and the latter in that of the men.

These, undoubtedly, are fruitful subjects for the exercise of our wit and humour: so very fruitful indeed, that it has been thought a difficult matter to determine which of the three we should the rather prefer, or even which of them is the most likely, supposing our election to be made, to redound the more particularly

particularly to our credit and advantage.

That the two latter topics, however, are capital auxiliaries in a dearth of the former, no one, I suppose, will deny. But as in all our disputes and controversies, we are said to derive the greater honour in proportion to the greatness and power of our adversary; so our opposition to the Godhead, I should imagine, must place us among
the

the foremost in the lists of fame. Supposing this admitted, I shall now revert to the lesser matters which have been already slightly touched on, and first, of the *double entendre*.

To put a modest woman to the blush, is the study and practice of a pretty fellow; and when we reflect on the motives by which he is actuated, we must assuredly give him our applause.

A suffusion on the cheek of beauty considerably heightens and improves its effect.---This the pretty fellow knows, and being a connoisseur in beauty, he wishes to see it in its meridian splendour: he knows too that indecency not unfrequently passes for wit, and very wisely considers, that by employing it at a proper season, his judgment, as well as his abilities, will be the more fully and clearly shewn.

This

This kind of conversation, however, is not confined to any particular class of men. The father engages in it in the presence of his daughter, and the husband in the company of his wife. Precise and formal people, indeed, are offended at this, and repeat with the Roman satirist---

—“ *Hic nullus verbis pudor, aut reverentia mensæ,*” &c.

“They are continually telling
us

us too, that "Virtue is its own reward;" that "Vice to be hated, need but to be seen," &c. &c. *Virtue its own reward---* ha! ha! ha! Poor creatures, have you entirely lost your senses? Hasten, prythee hasten to woods and wilds.---

*"Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous
wings,
And the night-raven sings."—*

Away! be gone! ye are not fit
for the society of men.

B

The

The next thing to be considered is the truly diverting practice of *throwing ridicule upon the king*: a practice, which, as it is pretty generally adopted, so it cannot but be highly approved.

Two very powerful passions, (emulation and envy) are found to reside in the human breast. These, I know, are frequently mistaken for each other; but in my opinion, they are wholly dissimilar and unlike. Spurred
on

on by *emulation*, for example, we boldly aim at excellence, and not unfrequently attain to it: disappointed in this, we are then goaded and stung by *envy*, and endeavour to bring down excellence to a level with ourselves. In a word, their discriminating features are easily seen.

Now as it is altogether impossible that we should ever arrive at kingly power and great-

ness, nothing better remains for us than to lessen majesty in the eyes of the people, and to degrade it as much as we can.* For this purpose, we may ring the changes on the following expressions of the poet---

“ *Much above a king!*

“ *The pride of kings!*

“ *Some monster of a king!*

“ *Look down to pity kings!*” &c. &c.

So

* “ Since we cannot attain to greatness, (says *Montaigne*) let us have our revenge by railing at it.”

So that the multitude is at length compelled to cry out with us---“What a wretched creature is a king! Gracious heaven, who would ever be a king!” &c.*



B 3

It

* We may likewise touch upon Jotham's parable in the book of Judges. The trees, he tells us, *on a time*, were desirous of chusing

It is asserted by some of our writers, that the present age is an atheistical one; but I can by no means subscribe to the opinion; for if the existence of a Deity be not acknowledged, what opportunity

sing a king. The olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine, were severally proposed, but the bramble carried the day. “And wherefore?” says a modern wit.—“Why, for this very obvious reason, the bramble is covered with thorns; capable of doing considerable injury, and consequently *properly qualified to become a king.*”——Admirable! Exquisitely satirical indeed!

opportunity has the metaphysician for displaying his abilities; the Socinian for engaging in controversy; or the libertine for disseminating his satire? No, the reigning belief is deism:--- But I will here give the outline of three common characters which are to be found in this, our sublunary world, so that the reader may be enabled to form an opinion of them; namely---the bold and daring atheist, the half-believing deist, and the

B 4 pusillanimous

puffanimous Christian. To begin with the Christian.

A Christian (i. e. a weak and credulous man) is a compound of humility, piety, and other antediluvian virtues. He remembers the scripture admonition, "Do unto all men as ye would they should do unto you," and therefore conducts himself according to the severest principles both of religion and morality.*

He

We are told by bishop Burnet, that the
fanatics

He considers virtue as the sovereign good, and thinks that to relieve the necessities of his fellow-creatures, must be pleasing

fanatics of his time, professed themselves to be “above morality,” which, as appears by some of their writings, was numbered among the *beggarly virtues*. But in this particular what are the fanatic times, when compared with ours? At the present day it may surely be asserted, that we are almost all above *morality*: for were that unfortunate creature to be found by accident in our streets, and perishing, there is no pretty gentleman to be met with, I presume, who would soil his fingers in raising her from the ground.

ring in the sight of the heavenly Master whom he professes to serve: for this he is sometimes pitied, and sometimes ridiculed, by the man of spirit, who uses very many endeavours to

“ Root th’ old woman from his trembling heart.”

But alas! every effort to reclaim such a man has hitherto been ineffectual. He obstinately lives and dies a Christian.

A deist (i. e. a man who re-
jects

jects the doctrines of Christianity, and whose religion in consequence of it is very properly termed *natural*) is made up entirely of inconsistencies. He acknowledges, indeed, the existence of an invisible Being, whom he represents as intelligent and good; but denies his interference in the affairs of men. Like to the atheist, he maintains, that nature is governed by general laws: laws, he says, which the sovereign mind

mind has fixed, and to which it gives a free and uninterrupted course. Every event in human life is therefore, by the deist, ascribed to natural causes, and the notion of a particular providence is considered by him as highly ridiculous and absurd. He will tell you too, that his religion is founded in reason, and that philosophy is always ready to adopt its tenets---But then he will sarcastically observe, that profane reason is not to be
 set

sets up against sacred mystery,
and that if such an attempt be
made, no punishment is great
enough for the impiety.*---
Such are the principles of ge-
nuine deism.†

An

* "L'eglise est infallible: et les savans doi-
vent se taire quand l'eglise parle." *Voltaire.*

† "As the good, the great, the sublime,
the ravishing, are found eminently in the
genuine principles of theism, it may be ex-
pected, from the analogy of nature, that the
base, the absurd, the mean, the terrifying
will be discovered equally in religious fictions
and chimeras." *Hume.*

An atheist (i. e. a deep and subtle reasoner) is a compound of incredulity, fatalism, * and other

* “La fatalité est l'ordre éternel, immuable, nécessaire, établi dans la nature, ou la liaison indispensable des causes qui agissent avec les effets qu'elles opèrent. D'après cette ordre, les corps pesants tombent, les corps légers s'élèvent, les matières analogues s'attirent, les contraires se repoussent; les hommes se mettent en société, se modifient les uns les autres, deviennent bons ou méchants, se rendent mutuellement heureux ou malheureux, s'aiment ou se haïssent nécessairement d'après la manière dont

other postdiluvian excellencies.

He acknowledges no invisible,

no

dont ils agissent les uns sur les autres. D'où l'on voit que la nécessité qui règle les mouvemens du monde physique, règle aussi tous ceux du monde moral, où tout est par conséquent soumis à la fatalité. En parcourant à notre insu & souvent malgré nous, la route que la nature nous a tracée, nous ressemblons à des nageurs forcés de suivre le courant qui les emporte," &c.

" Dans une nature où tout est lié, il n'existe point d'effet sans cause ; et dans le monde physique, aussi bien que dans le monde moral, tout ce qui arrive est une suite
nécess-

no intelligent power ; but conducts himself according to the principles of nature ; whose laws he supposes invariable, and from whom he deduces the spirit and essence of all things. He is of opinion, that while he can rank among his fellow creatures as a good husband, a good father,

a

nécessaire de causes visibles ou cachées, qui sont forcées d'agir d'après leurs propres essences. Dans l'homme, la liberté n'est que la nécessité renfermée au-dedans de lui-même."

Systeme de la Nature.

a good citizen, he has done his duty in this world---and he looks not for an hereafter. He knows, that failing in these particulars, he will be reprobated by those with whom he lives---he knows too, that if he transgress against the civil order of society, he is amenable to the laws of the land, which will not fail to punish him for his offences;---and he is therefore an honest man.

In support of his doctrine the atheist will demand---if an observance of the forms of devotion (which will ever be found to prevail among an ignorant and a credulous people) is to be set in competition with the practice of the moral and the social duties of life? He will tell us it is impossible they should subsist together: that they are wholly incompatible: that religion can answer no other end than to make men
mi-

miserable, to harden their hearts, and to drive the superstitious to despair.* He will never acknowledge that

“ By night the atheist half believes a God.”

C 2

No,

* “ Les opinions religieuses des hommes n’ont pour objet que de leur montrer la supreme felicité dans des illusions, pour lesquelles on allume leurs passions ; et comme les fantomes qu’on leur presente, ne peuvent point etre vus des memes yeux par tous ceux qui les contemplent, ils sont perpetuellement en dispute à leur sujet, ils se haïssent, ils se persecutent, et croient souvent bien faire en commettant des crimes
pour

No, nothing can shake his resolution. He openly delivers his opinions; nor is he under the smallest apprehension, in the present age, of meeting with
the

pour soutenir leurs opinions. C'est ainsi que la religion enivre les hommes dès l'enfance, de vanité, de fanatisme, et de fureurs s'ils ont l'imagination échauffée; si au contraire ils sont flegmatiques et laches, elle en fait des hommes inutiles à la société; s'ils ont de l'activité, elle en fait des frenétiques souvent aussi cruels pour eux-mêmes, qu'incommodes pour les autres."

Système de la Nature.

the fate of Socrates or Vanini :
on the contrary (his praise already ensured) he looks forward to an ample reward.

But the atheist will farther ask us, if *Epicurus* occasioned any commotion in Greece? If the writings of *Lucretius* stirred up the civil wars in Rome? If *Hobbes* was the cause of bloodshed? And lastly, if it was *atheism* that brought a king of England to the block?

Such is the atheist, who exultingly exclaims,

*"Thou nature art my Goddess! To thy laws
My services are bound."*

'Tis thou ("O Dea certe!") who hast
"Steel'd my breast against affliction's darts;"
'Tis thou who hast kindly granted me
"A cool suspense from pleasure and from pain."

'Tis thou---- "Yes, 'tis she,
continues his adversaries, who
has made you little better than a
machine, who has nearly level-
led you with the brute. In a
word

word, it may safely be said of ye all---

——“*Vacuum sine mente popellum.*”

A smile of indignation is his reply. He thinks that scepticism and infidelity only can keep the mind in constant play, and render it particularly vigorous and strong.

* * * *

Thus much premised, I will now enter more particularly

C 4 into

into my plan for abolishing Christianity: a plan so admirable in its principle, and so sure of producing the happiest effects, that I should hope, a statue of parian marble will be instantly erected in honour of my name.

To remove the prejudices of education is an herculean kind of labour, and in which few would willingly engage: The attempt, however, shall be mine; and though I am sensible

ble that religious opinions, when once admitted to the human breast, are generally pretty deeply rooted there, (I speak of the lower orders of the people)---I shall nevertheless expect, by aid of time and perseverance, to eradicate such truly pernicious weeds.

The chief points to be considered then, in a scheme of this nature, are the very great advantage that it is likely to derive

to

to the state, together with the comforts and conveniencies that it will undoubtedly procure to the people.

Now, there is every reason to believe (the prejudices of education once removed) that those infatuated persons who have hitherto wasted their hours in a church, would, in such a reformation of manners, be led to pass them more agreeably in taverns and public houses,

houses, to the very considerable benefit of his majesty's customs and excise.*

In the eyes of him who stands up for liberty of conscience,

* These branches of the revenue having of late years suffered a very considerable decrease, will evince the necessity of adopting my plan. Sunday is always to be considered as an holiday ;—and as a love of generous liquor will no longer be reckoned among our crimes, we may form a pretty tolerable estimate of the quantity of ale and spirits that will be swallowed on the sabbath day.

ence, who is an enemy to priestcraft, and who trembles at even the idea of persecution, churches and chapels must ever be offensive in the highest degree. I therefore humbly propose that they be immediately disposed of---not as has been formerly projected, by converting them into play-houses and exchanges, but by levelling them with the ground, and with the materials of which they are composed, erecting a magnificent

magnificent palace for the king. †

I have some little fear, indeed, that this part of my project, which goes to the pulling down of churches will be displeasing to the ladies in general, whom I would never willingly offend. “Pull down the churches,”

† His majesty's loving subjects having determined on raising such an edifice ; the expediency of the measure proposed, which will make a capital saving to the nation, must be generally felt and acknowledged.

churches," say they, distractedly---" Was there ever such a horrid thought!" "Where then are we to find a place for affignations? Where then are we to make display of our taste in drefs?---How, O how! shall we ever pass the tedious hours which Sunday is sure to bring? Cruel, cruel regulation, which will deprive us of the only amusement, cards indeed excepted, which this *unlucky** day affords."

These

* The Romans too, it may be remembered, had their *dies atri*, or "unlucky days;

—but

These undoubtedly are evils;
 but the lesser evil is always to
 be preferred to the greater—
 and if, in extinguishing Chris-
 tianity, the advantages are pal-
 pable and great, and if a law
 be actually passed for the better
 effecting it, no British female,
 I should hope, would ever
 murmur at the decree.

Yet think not, my pretty
 countrywomen, that I would
 rob

—but whether Sunday was included in the
 number I cannot pretend to say.

rob you of a single pleasure, had I not some one equal, if not superior, to substitute immediately in its place. If churches be once destroyed (and that not a vestige of them should remain, is particularly essential to my plan) balls, plays, operas, and all the delightful etcætera of happier days, will then be to the full as common, on the sabbath, as, in the present times, are devotion, cards, and dice.

The

The ladies will be pleased to consider too, that when my scheme is once adopted, and when religion shall be no more, that they will necessarily get rid of many restraints. If, for example, the practice of swearing be pleasing in a Bobadil, why should it not be equally so in a Lindamira? In the days of good queen Befs, indeed, (who by the way was herself a capital swearer) the character was not uncommon; but

D

now,

now, alas ! there is scarcely a woman to be met with who will venture on a splendid oath ; so many are her religious fears.

*“ Swear me Kate, like a lady, as thou art,
A good mouth-filling oath ; and leave “ in
sooth ;”*

And such protests to Sunday citizens.”

SHAKESPEARE'S HEN. IV. p. 1.

It is surely a mistaken notion, that swearing is so thoroughly a manly accomplishment, that it should be prohibited the weaker

weaker sex. In my opinion, it is to the full as agreeable in a woman as in a man,---And as it is altogether impossible for the pretty gentleman to call for his coffee without a d---n, which we may presently be convinced of, by stepping into any public room in town,---no good reason can be given, I believe, why the pretty lady should not be equally *emphatical* in asking for her tea.

The spirit that would be given to our conversation by this

truly attic refinement, is much more easily conceived than expressed. That to be denied the privilege alluded to, is considered by our women as a particular grievance, the following instances will sufficiently prove.

“ O, you should by all means refrain from gaming, (says the lady in the comedy to her female friend) you see how it makes the *men* swear and curse!
and

and when a *woman* is thrown into the same passion---why”
 ---“ That’s very true !---(returns her companion) one is a little put to it, sometimes, not to make use of the same words to exprefs it.”

---“ O had I leave to curse!”
 ---exclaims the tragedy heroine.

Here, I say, our women directly tell us, that they think it a hardship to be hindered from

D 3 cursing

curfing and fwearing ; and verry plainly infinuate, that it is nothing but the prohibition in the decalogue which has fo unfortunately fealed their lips.

It is remarked, indeed, by *Young*, in the character he has drawn of *Thaleftris*, that

—“ *Now and then, to grace her eloquence,
An oath fupplied the vacancies of fenfe.*”

But *Thaleftris* was a wonderful lady. She had fhaken off
the

the little prejudices of her sex,
and very clearly manifested,
that her soul was masculine* as
one could possibly wish. In a
little time we may meet with
many such.

* * * *

I have some little reason to
imagine, likewise, that the man
of the world, as well as the la-

D 4 dies

* See a curious dissertation on the *sex of
souls*;—printed at Amsterdam, 1730.

dies, will be tempted to oppose
my scheme. He remembers to
have read in the poets---

——“ *Bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent
flower,
But be the serpent under it.*”

“ *Away, and mock the times with fairest show,
False face must hide what the false heart doth
know.*”

Again---

——“ *Treasure up my precept:
The world's before thee—be a knave and prosper.
For*

*For he who deals with mankind on the square,
Is his own bubble, and undoes himself.—*

These he interprets literally : these he really considers as precepts. He will contend, that according to the above doctrine, religion is of very great *use* in the world : that like to war, it should be regarded as a *necessary evil*,* and tolerated by every state.

I grant

* “ Les idées fausses (says a celebrated writer) que tant de personnes ont sur l'utilité

I grant, indeed, that religion
is of infinite service, when taken
in

té de la religion, qu'il's jugent au moins propre a contenir le peuple, viennent elles-mêmes du préjugé funeste qu'il est des *erreurs utiles*, et que des vérités peuvent être dangereuses. Ce principe est le plus propre à éterniser les malheurs de la terre. Quiconque aura le courage d'examiner les choses, reconnoitra sans peine que tous les maux du genre humain sont dûs à ses erreurs et que les erreurs religieuses, doivent être les plus nuisibles de toutes, par l'importance qu'on y attache, par l'orgueil qu'elles inspirent

in the above point of view, and that they who go regularly three times a day to church, do not unfrequently carry on all their designs with impunity, and even without suspicion. In a word, they consider themselves as *privileged*

rent aux souverains, par l'abjection qu'elles prescrivent aux sujets, par les frénésies qu'elles excitent chez les peuples: on sera forcé d'en conclure que les erreurs sacrées des hommes sont celles dont l'intérêt des hommes exige la destruction la plus complète, et que c'est principalement à les anéantir que la saine philosophie doit s'attacher."

vileged persons, and practise every kind of fraud.*

Thwarted thus in his designs;
and unable any longer to play
the hypocrite, the man of the
world

* “ It is unsafe to draw any certain inference in favour of a man’s morals, from the fervour or strictness of his religious exercises, even though he himself believes them sincere.”——

——“ Every *prudent* man is on his guard when he meets with any extraordinary appearance of religion,” &c.

Hume’s Natural History of Religions.

world will no doubt be loud in
 his complaints; but as the ex-
 tinguishing of Christianity is
 the primary object of my pur-
 suit, the man of the world must
 be left to chance. And as se-
 veral proposals have been given
 to the public, in the view of put-
 ting a stop to the ravages of war,
 so I am of opinion, that this my
 darling project will put an ef-
 fectual period to all the mis-
 eries and inconveniences which
 the fashionable part of the com-
 munity

munity have so long complained of, and which have been occasioned entirely by religion and its laws.

There is a considerable number of people who are sticklers for a nominal religion, because they are *very clearly of opinion*, that it serves to keep the multitude in awe.* Let me, however,

* With submission to wiser judgments, however, I think this but a trifling objection

ever, be perfectly understood. When I talk of an abolishment of Christianity, I mean, that every outward appearance of religion

to my scheme. The less civilized part of the community, or those who may be properly stiled vagabonds, and who should by no means be considered with our labouring poor,—are certainly more in dread of temporal punishments, than they are of the justice and vengeance of Heaven. That we have “strict statutes and most *biting* laws,” no one, I suppose, will deny; and it is pretty generally remarked too—but more especially by foreigners,—that we do not suffer those laws to “*sleep*.”

religion be banished from among us, so that our pleasures may be free and unconfined. But then it is not in the power of any act of parliament to hinder a man from being thoroughly a *religionist at heart*, and very staunch religionists the vulgar will probably long remain.

By way of consolation, however, to the aforesaid silly creatures, who (in concert with the women, though from a very
dif-

ferent motive) will no doubt be murmuring at the loss of their *churches*, the following scriptural passages may be adduced, by which it will be perceived that they are still at liberty to serve their Maker (if after what has been said, they are really weak enough to think about it) without the assistance of a parson, and *entirely in their own way*.

“ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the *hypo-*

E *crites*

crites are: for they love to pray standing in the fynagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.---But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

Now, what can better warrant my very laudable intention
of

of putting down the clergy, demolishing the churches, and effectually destroying the *trade of religion*, (for no one I suppose will question my seriousness in the matter) than the above quoted verses? Will not the freethinker immediately ask us, if they do not sufficiently proclaim the inefficacy and unacceptableness of public prayer? Will he not tell us, that in establishing churches, we “err and go astray with open eyes?”--Will he not remind

us of the proverb, " the nearer the church the farther from God?" Will he not say that we are priest-ridden? In fine, will he not recommend to us to get rid of every "daggled-tail parson," as speedily as we possibly can?

That the lower orders of the people should continue to manifest a partiality for the Christian religion, when from the conduct of their superiors they may perceive how very little it is held in account, has been
thought

thought extraordinary by many. But the poor and illiterate vulgar, it should be remembered, are for quietly jogging on to Heaven--they pursue the beaten track--they never stop to make enquiries. In a word, they foolishly take up with things as they find them; and however astonishing it may appear to stronger minds, they actually look upon schism to be a crime, and consider the schismatic as an enemy to the state.



Is there, I would ask, on earth a more dreadful malady than madness; and is it not the ordinary attendant upon superstition? What can possibly be more distressing than

*“To see the noble and most sovereign REASON,
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh.”*

Now, when the invincible, seraphic, and irrefragable doctors of the day, have delivered their subtilized discourses on
faith

faith, grace, justification, &c.
 &c. and when they have enve-
 loped their doctrine in a cloud,
 which it is impossible for the
 keenest optics ever to penetrate,
 can we wonder that their fol-
 lowers who vainly attempt it,
 should by a continual gazing
 become mad?*---

E 4

---The

* Why the following charges were given
 to us—"Be not righteous overmuch; nei-
 ther make thyself overwise"—we may pret-
 ty easily guess; and when we recollect the
 speech of Festus to St. Paul, in which he
 said

---The fact is, the arguments
of these mystical high-fliers

*"Directly tend
Against the point they would defend."*

All, in short, is mystery.*---
Yes, mystery is the star that
has guided our fanatics to Beth-
lehem.

said to him—"Paul, thou art *beside thyself*,"
we should also bear in mind what it was that
had turned the Apostle's brain.

* "Where mystery begins religion ends,"
says an eminent divine.

lehem.*---And whoever would enjoy the *men's sana in corpore sano*, must never listen to the voice of enthusiasm, bigotry or error. But enough of these.--

After the very great diversion that the parson has always afforded us, and which I have very candidly acknowledged at the

* “ Then Herod, when he had privily called the *wise men*, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.”

“ And he sent them to Bethlehem,” &c.

Matt. ii. 7, 8.

the opening of this performance, we must feel some little regret in putting him down: but then it must be remembered, that in doing this, we shall no longer be subject to the *odium theologicum*; or, as it has been wittily translated, *theological impertinence*, and to which we at present so tamely submit. Nor Haoityulbsh dny means be forgotten, that there is still a Deity to ridicule, whose justice and benevolence we may question
and

and arraign: so that our politicians will have little to fear from the wits, who, I very readily grant, might otherwise be meddling in national affairs, and consequently prove extremely troublesome to our rulers and ministers of state.

To shew, however, that I am no way singular in my opinions respecting our religion and its forms, I shall here beg leave to cite a respectable authority

thority for what I have advanced---No other than the great and learned Erasmus---and these are his words---

---“ Now it is worthy of observation, that the *Christian religion* seems to have a very near relation to folly, and not the smallest alliance with wisdom: of the truth whereof---if you desire somewhat more than my bare assertion, you may presently become sensible,
by

by considering that women, children, old men and fools, led as it were by a secret impulse of nature, are always most regular in repairing to church, and most zealous, devout, and attentive in the performance of the several parts of divine service," &c.*

Such are the sentiments approved and adopted by the
man

* See the *Mariae Encomium*.

man whom the poet has very significantly styled

“The glory of the priesthood and the shame.”

Sentiments, which must, I think, when it is considered by how grave and venerable a personage they were originally delivered, sufficiently justify me in my undertaking; and at the same time serve as an answer to every cavil and objection that may be made to it.

That

That the religious character in general has at all times been considered as particularly mean and contemptible, the following quotations will shew.---

“ It is the women who excite the men to devotion and supplication, and the observance of religious days. We rarely meet with any one that lives apart from the females, and yet is *addicted to such practices.*” *Strabo.*

They

“ They who undertake the most criminal and the most dangerous enterprizes, are commonly the most religious.”

Diod. Sic.

“ The doctrines of the Christian religion which recommend only passive courage and suffering, have subdued the spirit of mankind, and fitted them for slavery and subjection.”

Machiavel.

“ Survey

“Survey most nations and most ages. Examine the religious principles which have, in fact, prevailed in the world. You will scarcely be persuaded that they are other than sick men’s dreams, or perhaps you will regard them more as the playfome whimsies of monkeys in human shape, than the serious dogmatical asseverations of a being who dignifies himself with the name of rational.”

F

---“ Most

---“ Most men are ambitious ; but their ambition may commonly be satisfied by excelling in some particular profession, and thereby promoting the interests of society. The ambition of the clergy can often be satisfied only by promoting ignorance and superstition, and implicit faith and pious frauds : they must not, like the rest of the world, give scope to their natural movements and sentiments : they
mu

must set a guard over their looks, and words, and actions : and in order to support the veneration paid them by the ignorant vulgar, they must not only keep a remarkable reserve, but must promote the spirit of superstition by a continued grimace and hypocrisy." *Hume.*

Timidity and irresolution have hindered us from throwing off the shackles under which the church has so long

obliged us to groan. We are apt, indeed, to boast of our liberty and freedom of speech, but when shall we meet with an honest fellow who can be compared with Mr. Broderic of Ireland?---Of whom it is recorded by Swift, that he pulled the Bishop of Kilaloo by his lawn sleeve, and told him, in a bold and threatening manner, that " he hoped to live to see the day, when there should not be one of his order in the kingdom."

dom." This was in truth an extraordinary man. This is the character I am in search of --- This is the *reforming spirit* to which I might look up for encouragement and protection; and yet I almost despair:--- But away with despair! It is the vice of little minds, and I may yet be fortunate enough to see the times, when there shall be

“ An harmonious inclination
Of all degrees to *reformation* :
And oyster-women lock their fish up,
And trudge away to cry,—*No Bishop!* ”

Thus much set down, I shall
now hasten towards a close,
reserving my grander propo-
sitions *in petto*, 'till called upon
by the powers that be---just
remarking, however, by the
way, that as in the opinion of
the materialist, the doctrine of
the immortality of the soul is
nothing but a metaphysical ro-
mance ;

mance ;* and as the more re-
 fined among my countrymen
 are

* “ Ne soyons donc point surpris des
 hypotheses subtiles, aussi ingenieuses que
 peu satisfaisantes, auxquelles les prejugs
 théologiques ont forcé les plus profonds
 des spéculateurs modernes de recourir,
 toutes les fois qu’il’s ont taché de concilier
 la spiritualité de l’ame avec l’action phy-
 sique des êtres materiels sur cette substance
 incorporelle, sa reaction sur ces êtres, son
 union avec le corps. L’esprit humain ne
 peut que s’égarer lorsque renonçant au

are verging fast towards materialism, I may very reasonably expect that the prevalence of such opinion will materially promote and forward my design.

One

temoinage de ses sens, il se laissera guider par l'enthousiasme et l'autorité. Enfin, si l'on veut se faire une idée des entraves que la theologie a données aux genies des philosophes Chrétiens, l'on n'a qu'à lire les *romans metaphisiques* de Leibnitz, de Malebranche, de Cudworth," &c. &c.

Systeme de la Nature.

One thing I had nearly forgotten.---The revenues of my lords the bishops, together with those of the inferior clergy, may be sequestered to the use of the state. The money will be acceptable enough, but what are we to do with the men? Botany Bay? No---the better plan will be to send them forthwith to America. Yes, America is certainly the place for them---There they may be sure of finding friends, particularly
the.

the several prelates, who will be welcomed with acclamations, and received with open arms.

* * * *

That the world will be divided in opinion with regard to my project, I can have very little doubt. Many will highly approve it, and be for granting me a handsome recompence; while others will as stoutly maintain that I should incontinently

tinently be sent to Bedlam:
 To prove, however, that I am
sound of intellect, and that I
really know what I am about, I
 do openly and honestly de-
 clare, that when my plan is
 once adopted, I shall be ready
 to receive as the reward of
 my labours, such part of the
 SPOILS OF THE CHURCH as the
 Parliament of Great Britain in
 its wisdom and goodness shall
 be pleased to allot to me---A
 reward

reward which I have every reason to believe will be proportioned to my services and merits, and which may probably exceed my fondest hopes.

From the arguments made use of, I may expect that an Act will be shortly passed, declaring the system of the Gospel useless, null and of no effect. Adieu then to our Reverend

Doctors! *Dec. 19*
1811.

Doctors! This is a very enlightened age, and there can be no occasion for teachers.

F I N I S.

BRITISH
14 JUL 74
MUSEUM
Books Printed for T. BECKET, in Pall-Mall.

In four Volumes Crown Octavo, illustrated
with Five Vignettes, beautifully engraved,
(Price 14s. sewed),

Dedicated to his Royal Highness the PRINCE
OF WALES,

I. MISCELLANIES
IN VERSE AND PROSE.

MANY OF WHICH NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

By Mr. PRATT.

An Abstract of the Contents of the Four Volumes.

VOL. I.

Sympathy, a Poem. Tears of Genius, a Poem.
The Art of Rising on the Stage, a Poem, in
three Cantos. Poems from the Annual
Register. Poetical Pieces from Liberal
Opinions. An Epistle to H. R. H the
Prince of Wales. Epitaphs. Ballad Poems
from Emma Corbet. Songs. Prologues
and Epilogues. Translations from the La-
tin of Sanasarius, Dr. Lowth, &c.

VOL. II.

Prize Poems, written for the Vase at Bath
Easton Villa. Theron, a Tale. Miscella-
neous Verses. The School for Vanity, a
Comedy in five Acts, never before printed.

VOL. III.

Contains Twenty two Moral Tales.

VOL. IV.

Moral Tales continued. Also Fifteen Essays on various Subjects.

Just Published by the same Author, Price 2s.6d,

A NEW EDITION OF

2 LANDSCAPES IN VERSE.
TAKEN IN SPRING.

Adorned with Two Vignettes, finely engraved.

3. Crazy Tales, price 2s. 6d.
4. Moral Tales, by the same, price 2s. 6d.
5. The Country Justice, a Poem, by the late Dr. Langhorne, three Parts, price 4s.
6. The Correspondents, an Original Novel, price 2s. 6d.
7. Observations upon the new Opinions of John Hunter, in his late Treatise on the Venereal Disease, by Jesse Foot, Surgeon. Part I. and II. Price 5s.
8. Six Letters to a Friend on the establishment of Sunday Schools. By Philip Parsons, A. M. Minister of Wye in Kent, price 1s. 6d.
9. Harold. A Tragedy by the Rev. Mr. Boyce. Price 3s.
10. The Works of R. J. Sullivan, Esq. 7 Vols. 8vo. Price 2 Guineas bound.
11. A Tour to Ermenonville. Price 2s.
12. The works of the Chevalier de Florain : Containing Galatea, a Pastoral Romance ; with German, Portuguese, Grecian, Spanish French, and Persian Tales. 2 Vols. 5s. sewed.
13. A complete Index to the first 70 Volumes of the Monthly Review. 2 Vols. 8vo. Price 15s. in Boards.

14. Foot on the Diseases of the Urethra, with the method of Cure. 4th Edition. Price 2s.
15. An Essay on Comic Genius. With reference to the several Characters exhibited by Mrs Jordan. Price 1s.
16. An Essay on the Evidence, External and Internal, relating to the Poems attributed to Thomas Rowley. Containing a general View of the whole Controversy. Price 2s. 6d. New Edition. By Thomas James Matthias, Esq.
17. Moral Tales. By M. Marmontel. A new Edition, in three Volumes, illustrated with 16 elegant Engravings. Price 10s. 6d. bound.
18. An Essay on the Nature and Existence of a Material World. Addressed to Dr. Priestley and Dr. Price. 3s. sewed.
19. The Temple of Wit, and the Temple of Folly : A Vision in Verse. 1s.
20. The Critic ; or, A Tragedy Rehearsed. By R. B. Sheridan, Esq. 1s. 6d.
21. A Monody upon the Death of Lord Ashburton. Price 1s.
22. Variety : A Comedy, in five Acts. 1s. 6d.
23. Dissipation, a Comedy. By M. P. Andrews, Esq. 1s. 6d.
24. Bon Ton : A Comedy of two Acts. By D. Garrick, Esq. 1s.
25. The Irish Widow, a Comedy, in 2 Acts. By the same. 1s.
26. Short Directions for the Management of Infants. By T. Mantel, Surgeon, 2s.

